

Patrick (Paddy) Ashe 18.03.1954 – 19.06.2022

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I first met Paddy Ashe 49 years ago when, as a 19 year old student, he enrolled in the Faculty of Science in University College Dublin in September 1973 at the time when Carmel F. Humphries (who had studied with August Thienemann in Plön) was Professor and head of the Department of Zoology and I was a member of the academic staff. During the second year of his studies Paddy often consulted me about course matters. He had a particular interest in zoology with an inquiring mind, seeking information additional to course content and frequently asking about my own specialist area of research in freshwater ecology and insect taxonomy. That was when he first heard the term *Chironomidae*.

Paddy achieved a high standard in his second year examinations and easily qualified to enrol in the honours zoology degree course for a further two years. On entering year 3 of the 4-year BSc. Honours Zoology degree course in September 1975, Paddy approached me and expressed a particular interest in joining my research group. At that time we were investigating the freshwater insect fauna in southwest Ireland, where the Limnology Research Unit of the Zoology Department was coordinating a major multi disciplinary project on the rivers and lakes of the Killarney Valley. On discussing various options, Paddy indicated that he would particularly like to be involved in our ongoing studies on the chironomid fauna of the River Flesk. He knew that we had discovered several interesting species, including the second record in Europe of *Buchonomyia thienemanni*, as well as several undescribed pupal morphotypes that included exuviae of *Eurycnemus crassipes* and other Orthoclaudiinae of taxonomic interest. He joined my small research group and this introduction to ecological studies on chironomids in 1976 was the beginning of his lifelong taxonomic interest in non-biting midges.



Paddy Ashe 2016. Photo: Declan Murray.

He prepared an undergraduate thesis based on material collected in April, July, September and December 1976 and in April 1977, during field trips to the site on the River Flesk where *B. thienemanni* had been found. He graduated in September 1977 with a BSc Honours degree in Zoology. After graduation, Paddy asked if I would “take him on” as a PhD candidate. I readily agreed and he immediately commenced his PhD studies on a more detailed investigation of the ecology and taxonomy of the Chironomidae of the River Flesk. This was largely based on specimens regularly collected by drift nets in 1978 and 1979, at several locations on the river from its source to its point of entry to Lough Leane, at Killarney. During this period Paddy was increasingly absorbed by the multiple taxonomic and nomenclatural issues in the Chironomidae and he acquired an exceptional knowledge of details, and interpretation, of the Zoological Code. Consequently the scope of his doctorate research was expanded into two parts; Part I giving an account of his studies in the River Flesk, and Part II to be a literature-based study to clarify and resolve taxonomic issues in the Chironomidae at generic and subgeneric level by compiling an up to date Catalogue of chironomid genera and subgenera of the world. He submitted his thesis in November 1982. The external examiner of the thesis reported “Part I is a very valuable faunistic work and Part II is of very high importance for Chironomidae research in general.....since a long time we have needed such a catalogue of Chironomid genera – everybody in the world dealing with aquatic insects will be thankful of the basic contribution to make systematics in Chironomidae more comprehensible”. Paddy was conferred with the degree of PhD in Spring 1983. The catalogue, Part II of his thesis, was published as Supplement No. 17 of *Entomologica scandinavica*.



Paddy Ashe (center in dark sweater) at the banquet in Dungaíre Castle, Kinvarra, County Galway during the excursion following the Dublin Chironomidae Symposium, 1979. Upper row from left: NN (not chironomidologist), Endre Willassen, NN (not chironomidologist), Gail Grodhaus, H. Ryser, I. Evaldsson, B. Krebs, Godtfred Halvorsen, Paddy Ashe, A. Kovacs, Ernst Josef Fittkau, Helen Roback, Lars Brundin, Umberto Ferrarrese, Claus Lindegaard, Henk Moller-Pillot. Lower row from left: Friedrich Reiss, Colette Dowling, Dave Rosenberg, Ole Sæther, Bernhard Lindeberg, Georgy Devai, Selwyn Roback, Freddie Murray. Photo: Declan Murray.



Irish Biogeographical Society meeting in Kennedy's Pub, Lincoln Place Dublin, 2016. James P. O'Connor (Editor), Declan Murray (Executive), Paddy Ashe (Chairman), John Walsh (Treasurer), Mark Holmes (Executive). The display case in the background contains publications of the Society. Photo by Freddie Murray (Executive).

After graduation Paddy held a temporary post-doctoral position in Trinity College Dublin. He went on to participate in the Royal Entomological Society of London sponsored expedition “*Project Wallace*” in 1985 and, immediately after attending the Chironomidae Symposium in Bergen in 1985, he travelled to Indonesia spending almost 6 months researching the diversity of the chironomid fauna in the rainforest of Sulawesi. On his return to Ireland he had a temporary research period in the Zoology Department of University College Galway and simultaneously established himself as a freelance entomologist. He commenced consultancy work for commercial businesses and State Institutes, including the Irish Forestry Service that regularly called on his expertise, until he became unwell in November 2021. Throughout his working career as a freelance consultant entomologist Paddy was never distracted from his main interest and remained a very active researcher on Chironomidae. He maintained lasting contact with similarly minded colleagues throughout the world and continued to publish - with numerous contributions on taxonomy, phylogeny, zoogeography and systematics.



At Bodensee 1997. Friedrich Reiss, Samantha Hughes, Declan A. Murray, Paddy Ashe, Peter H. Langton. Photo: Freddie Murray.

Paddy assisted in organisation of the 7th chironomid symposium in Dublin in 1979 and was an enthusiastic and active participant, as a scientist and socially, at subsequent symposia in Talahassee, 1982; Bergen, 1985; Debrecen, 1988; Amsterdam, 1991; Canberra, 1994; Freiburg, 1997; Madeira, 2006; Nankai 2009; Trondheim, 2011, České Budějovice, 2014 and Trento, 2017. He merited the international reputation he achieved through cooperation with his colleagues in Ireland and in Australia, France, Germany, Norway and the USA. Paddy has co-authored more than 100 publications from his international cooperation. We are indebted to him for these significant contributions, sadly abruptly cut off. The situation regarding the unfinished Volumes 3 and 4 of the World Catalogue is being resolved. Please see the [Chironomidae Bibliography for an overview of Paddy’s publications on Chironomidae](#).

Before the pandemic era in 2020 Paddy and I, frequently also joined by our friend and colleague Jim (J.P.) O’Connor, would meet regularly every Friday, either in the National Museum of Ireland, Natural History, or (and!) in a Dublin pub, to share opinions on our multiple ongoing “projects” and discuss, or argue about, taxonomic issues.

Paddy became unwell in November 2021 and following a long illness in hospital he died on the morning of June 19 2022. Paddy has left a notable legacy, as a person, a researcher and in what he achieved. Paddy Ashe has been a good friend and colleague. He is greatly missed.